

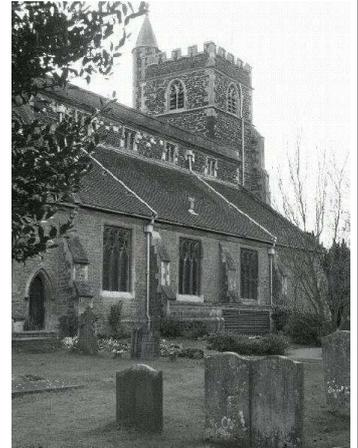
Ringling at All Saints in the 1950s

Replenishing the band

Only half of the pre-war ringers remained after the war, and training new ringers began in earnest as soon as the wartime ban on ringing was lifted.

The band grew rapidly, and in 1953 the number of members peaked at two dozen.

Many ringers were trained (and then lost) during the 1950s, and there was a continual drive for recruits.



Performances

During the 1950s the local band rang no peals (performances of over 5000 changes that last around 3 hours), though there were unsuccessful peal attempts in 1950, 1952 and 1953.

The band rang some quarter peals (performances that last about 45 minutes), often on the spur of the moment if the right people turned up for service ringing. Most years they probably rang a few, but we can't be sure because they didn't keep proper records. The dedications of the performances that were recorded are:

- 12-3-1951 Half muffled tribute to Dr E Ward, churchwarden
- 25-8-1951 First quarter by a local band¹
- 28-12-1953 Half muffled tribute to Fred Langley, Sexton/Verger
- 11-6-1954
- 2-8-1954
- 30-7-1955 For the marriage of Rev AGG Thurlow²
- 8-2-1956 To mark the birth of Christopher Newton³
- 28-8-1958 Half muffled, in memory of WJ Paice⁴

1 The post-war band – there had been local quarter peals earlier in the century

2 An eminent ringer, who was curate at All Saints just before the war

3 The son of two All Saints ringers

4 An eminent former ringer at All Saints

Ringers at All Saints during the 1950s

37 of the 263 known ringers at All Saints rang here during the 1950s

Edgar John (Eddie) Whittingham	1903 - 1968
William James (Bill) Brooks	1914 - 1963
Walter John (Wally) Pearce	1925 - 1984
George Wigmore	1929 - 1974
E (Ted) Langley	1930 - 1959
Gwen Crockford	1945 - 1954
Godfrey Moles	1945 - 1950
Tom Langley	1945 - 1958
John Green	1945 - 1954
Lennard ('Jack') Woodason	1945 - 1964
Mary Cole	1946 - 1980
Jimmy Elliott	1947 - 1973
Walter Newton	1947 - 1958
Ernest Pearce	1948 - 1968
Miss ES Barnard	1949 - 1951
Barbara Crockford (Newton)	1949 - 1958
Patricia Newport	1949 - 1951
John Perkins	1949 - 1950
R L Grover	1950 - 1953
Miss Ann E Taylor	1951 - 1953
Miss Ann E Moles	1952 - 1953
Keith R Goddard	1952 - 1966
RG Brown	1952 - 1953
Miss L Langley	1952 - 1954
Miss GN (Gill) Glennie	1952 - 1954
Miss CE Phillips	1952 - 1955
Ernest Harvey Mitchell	1953 - 1958
Mr B Lawrence	1954 - 1954
Miss Gillian Piggott	1954 - 1956
John Watts	1956 - 1960
Michael J Lewis	1956 - 1958
Mrs G Cozens	1957 - 1961
Miss Jane Huckings	1957 - 1962
Miss Furth	1957 - 1957
Miss Henderson	1957 - 1957
Miss Jane Kennett	1957 - 1957
Mr Palterman	1959 - 1962

Some 1950s ringers

These are the ringers from the 1950s of which we have pictures.

William James Brooks (Bill) (member 1914-63)

Bill learnt to ring in Kent, where he was a gardener at Hever Castle. He moved to Wokingham just before the First War and lived at 13 Langborough Road. He became Tower Foreman in 1922, and held the post until his death in 1963. He twice tried to step down, but was persuaded to stay on by the ringers, who held him in great regard. He always encouraged young ringers, often cycling with them to ring at other towers.



Walter John Pearce (Wally) (member 1925-84)

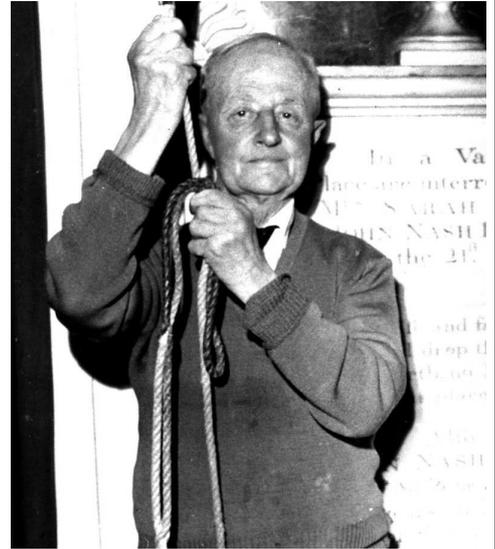
Wally came from a Wokingham family, and was a plumber by trade. For many years he was also Sexton and Verger, living in a cottage next to the church. He learned to ring in his teens, and joined the band in 1925. He was Bill Brooks' deputy in the post-war period, and was responsible for training throughout the 1950s. He had an outgoing personality, but he could be intimidating at times. He spent his final years in sheltered housing opposite the church where he had rung for nearly sixty years, and died in August 1984.



Some 1950s ringers

Edgar John Whittingham (member 1903-68)

'Eddie' was born in 1883, and grew up to become a carpenter. He learnt to ring in his teens, and joined the band in 1903. He went on to become its longest serving member, ringing until his death 65 years later, during a normal ringing practice in May 1968.



He was always known as 'Eddie', and when he died, no one knew his real name was Edgar, which is why his tombstone records him as 'Edward', a name he never had.



Mary Cole (member 1946-80)

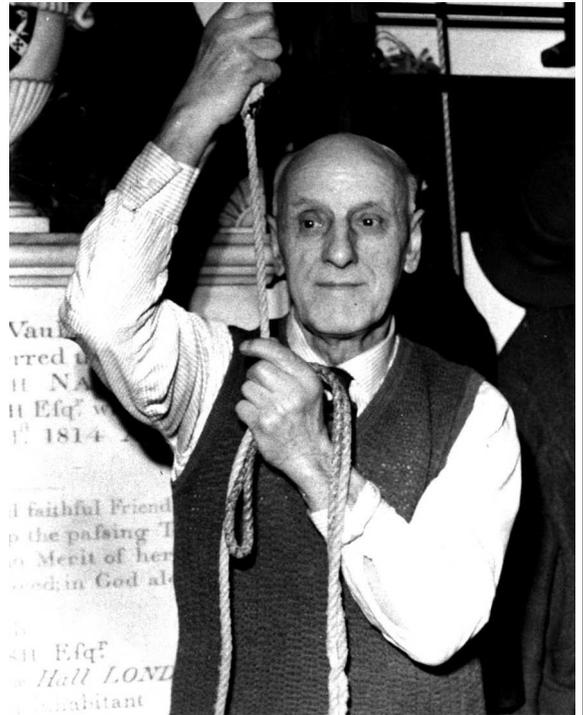
Mary came from a ringing family. Her father learnt to ring here in 1901, and her brother in 1936, shortly before he died in the war. Mary was one of many ringers who learnt just after the war, when the band needed to rebuild its numbers. She became an active member of the growing post-war band, and served as Tower Secretary for twenty years. She continued to audit the Sonning Deanery Bellringers accounts even after she gave up ringing. She still lives in Wokingham.



Some 1950s ringers

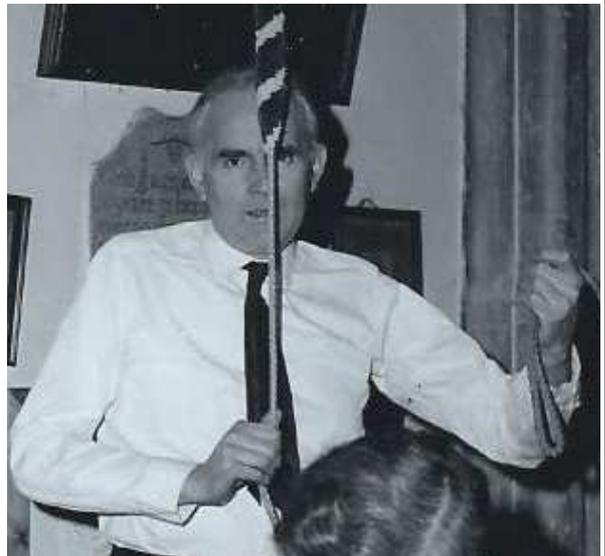
George Wigmore (member 1929-74)

George was a hire car chauffeur with Herrings (and later Brimblecombe) and was at one time the preferred driver of Hon. Mrs Corfield, a former Mayor. He lived in Peach Street, and in his final years, moved to Sale Garden Cottages. He learnt to ring, aged 11, at the turn of the 20th century, and was 40 when he came to Wokingham in 1929. He rang regularly until Christmas 1973, a total of almost 74 years, of which 45 were while he rang in Wokingham. He died the following September.



Ernest Harvey Mitchell (member 1934-43, 1953-58, 1963-68)

Harvey (known in his early years as Ernie) was born in 1918, the son of a sawmill worker. He worked all his life in clerical jobs, spending the last thirty or so years as a clerk at the Southern Electricity Board in Reading. He learnt to ring at All Saints in his teens, and though he moved away from Wokingham, he rejoined the band when he returned. He suffered an incapacitating stroke some years ago.

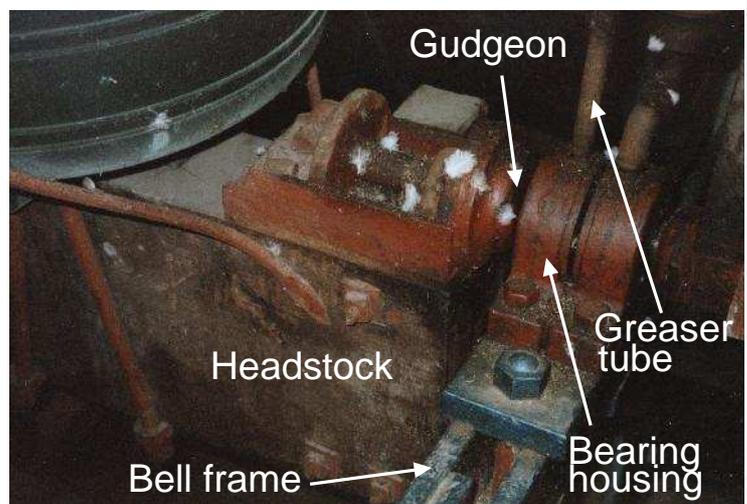


Bell restoration in 1958

When the bells were augmented in 1903, they were still hung on traditional plain bearings – bronze blocks with a channel in which the gudgeon pins on the ends of the headstock sit. They run less freely than ball bearings, and need regular lubrication.

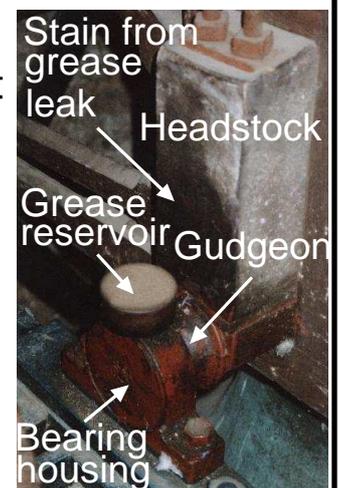


In 1958, the plain bearings were replaced with ball bearings. The bells remained in the tower, with each being lifted in turn while the new bearing assemblies were fitted. (The bearings are inside closed housings that keep out the dirt).

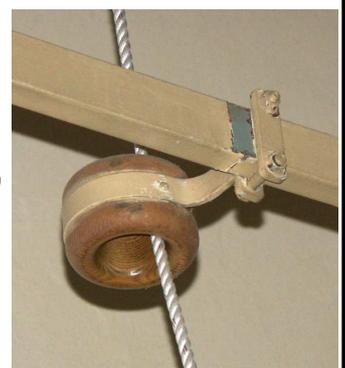


The bearings were fitted with greasers, which were not really needed. Over the years, enthusiastic use of the greasers forced in too much grease, which burst the seals round the gudgeons allowing the grease to leak.

The white patches in the picture are pigeon down stuck to the grease. Pigeons perch outside the louvres, and their feathers get blown into the tower.



Rope guides were also installed in 1958. Prior to that, the long length of unguided rope above the ringers had made the bells very difficult to ring.



Ringling outings in the 1950s

In 1948, the band held its first 'ringing outing' – travelling between several churches, ringing at each. The outings continued through the 1950s to destinations including Kent, Dorset and Gloucester.



(Left 1949): Pat Newport, Mary Cole, Gwen Crockford, Barbara Crockford, (front) Walter Newton.

(Right 1952?): (back) Walter Pearce, Robin Pearce¹, Walter Newton, (middle) [??], [??], Keith Goddard, Ted Langley, Harry Dyer, Tom Langley, [??], Len Woodason, Ernie Pearce, John Watts, (front) Bill Brooks



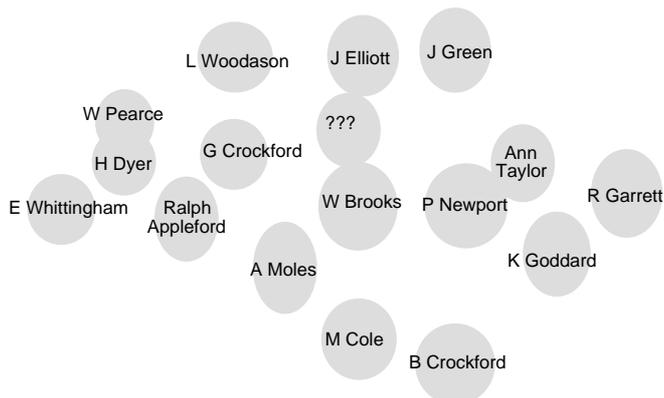
(Left 1954): Harvey Mitchell, Len Woodason, Harry Dyer, Bill Brooks, Barbara Newton, Gillian Piggott, Mary Cole.

(Right late 1950s): Bill Brooks, Keith Goddard, Frank Tomlinson², George Wigmore, Jane Huckings, Walter Newton, Len Woodason, David Tomlinson, John Watts, Walter Pearce, [??]

1 Robin Pearce was not a ringer

2 Frank Tomlinson rang at Binfield

Another outing



1952

Ringling in the Parish Magazine

Over the last 150 years the Parish Magazine has featured many articles about ringing, but they were few and far between in the 1950s. Most of those few articles were appeals for recruits.

There was one intriguing article, which appeared in October 1953, written by 'SM Finch', who was not a ringer:

Church Bell Ropes – *We had the loan of a Barrel Organ and spent the day on Sat Sept 12th going round the town with it. The grand sum of £17-12-2 was collected. Our thanks are due to the enthusiasm and help of four young Bell Ringers. A special thanks to Mr H Dyer who so nobly pushed the Organ all day.*

Bell ropes are not cheap, but repairing and replacing them are routine activities for ringers, so it seems unusual to have a special fund raising event to pay for them.